

## THE "WAR PRISM" – ENSURING UNITY OF EFFORT

BY

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**THE “WAR PRISM” - ENSURING UNITY OF EFFORT**

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The U.S. Army has maintained its relevancy in the post-Cold War era by training for and engaging in the other forms of warfare that had little priority during the Cold War because it then focused mostly in the high-intensity Soviet threat. Future success for the U.S. Army will depend on its agility to effectively operate across the entire spectrum of warfare. The first - and most important - step in achieving this objective is to instill the appropriate mindset across the Army. This mindset must be instilled in every Soldier, from the most senior four-star general to the newest recruit. After years of organizing, training, and equipping large formations to operate as efficient and effective lethal combat units, the Army has begun to lead the charge in building teams throughout the Joint Force and in the Interagency and Intergovernmental organizations. The Army is re-learning many hard lessons from its operations in Iraq and Afghanistan about countering threats at the low-intensity segment of the war-fighting spectrum. Unity of effort is one of these key lessons. This SRP presents a framework to assure unity of effort from the strategic to tactical levels.





## THE “WAR PRISM” - ENSURING UNITY OF EFFORT

War in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has once again shown itself to be a fickle monster, an ancient hydra able to re-grow its severed heads. During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the U.S. Army grew comfortable dealing with the high-intensity head of this hydra. In a bipolar world of dueling superpowers, U.S. tanks, carriers, jets and the finest trained and equipped Soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines enabled the United States to defeat the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) during a protracted “Cold War.” The U.S. Army had nearly perfected high-intensity warfare training based on a new doctrine called Airland Battle – a force oriented, highly lethal, attrition-based approach to warfare. The U.S. Army built combat training centers that rehearsed and trained Airland Battle Doctrine in live force-on-force environments that sharpened the US “war saber.” The Army developed Mission Essential Task Lists (METL), Battle Tasks, General Defense Plans, cross-walks, terrain walks, and nesting diagrams to insure that all Soldiers knew what was expected from Corps level down through Division, Brigade, Company, Platoon - even down to the individual Soldier whose job book listed everything a Soldier was expected to Be, Know, and Do. Army Training and Evaluation Program (ARTEP) manuals, coupled with Mission Training Plan (MTP) manuals, delineated Tasks, Conditions, and Standards for collective and individual tasks. The Army tightly linked training to METLs to war-fighting mission. Standards were clearly briefed and back-briefed, rehearsed and executed, reviewed and refined, inculcated and synthesized. The Army enforced unity of command to ensure that orders given would be orders understood, obeyed, and executed. Responsibility could be fixed. Adventure training – training outside a Soldier’s Military Operations Specialty - was discouraged as frivolous.

The nation expected its Cold War Army to fight from its forward-based locations when the “balloon went up.” The United States had a trained and ready “Band of Excellence” Army ready to fight on freedom’s frontiers. It was a “good,” efficient, and orderly Army – a place for everything, and everything in its place.

The threat of annihilation by another nuclear armed superpower focused the Army on its mission as the “war winning” service of the US armed forces. When the Soviet Union crumbled, however, a new world emerged. With the end of the Cold War, the zero-sum game ended, and the era of high-intensity conflict - at least for the foreseeable future - ended as well. As the world’s lone superpower - some have called the United States a “hyper-power”<sup>1</sup> - the United States has been able to flex its muscle without credible threats of retaliation. Emerging reality, however, has changed the core of the Army. Instead of its 2001 purpose to “fight and win our Nation’s wars,”<sup>2</sup> the Army now has an operational concept with the imperative to “seize, retain and exploit the initiative.”<sup>3</sup> Has the US Army lost its warrior ethos? Has being “bogged down” in nation-building, peacekeeping and other irregular warfare tasks at the low-intensity end of the spectrum of war - the segment of counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism - eroded its “throat-grappling instinct”<sup>4</sup>? This SRP analyzes this issue from the perspective of the Army’s role in unifying the nation’s 21<sup>st</sup> century security efforts.

The U.S. Army has maintained its relevancy in the post-Cold War era by training for and engaging in the other forms of warfare that had little priority during the Cold War because it then focused mostly on the high-intensity Soviet threat. Future success for the U.S. Army will depend on its agility to effectively operate across the entire spectrum of warfare. The first - and most important - step in achieving this objective is to instill

the appropriate mindset across the Army. This mindset must be instilled in every Soldier, from the most senior four-star general to the newest recruit. After years of organizing, training, and equipping large formations to operate as efficient and effective lethal combat units, the Army has begun to lead the charge in building teams throughout the Joint Force and in the Interagency and Intergovernmental organizations. The Army is re-learning many hard lessons from its operations in Iraq and Afghanistan about countering threats at the low-intensity segment of the war-fighting spectrum. This SRP argues that the most important recent lesson the Army has learned is the need to sustain unity of effort in low-intensity conflicts.

#### Unity of Effort

Joint Publication 3-0, Operations, defines unity of effort as the, “coordination and cooperation toward common objectives, even if the participants are not necessarily part of the same command or organization - the product of successful unified action.”<sup>5</sup>

The same publication defines the related concept of unified action as “the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort.”<sup>6</sup>

Unity of effort is the end-state - or result - of unified action. Every Soldier should understand the intellectual underpinnings of this concept. This SRP describes these intellectual underpinnings and offers an intellectual framework to assist the practitioner in visualizing the conceptualization, formulation, and execution a plan of unified action that will produce unity of effort from the strategic level down to the tactical level. This framework is called the “War Prism.”

### The “War Prism” – Features

For the purposes of this paper, the “War Prism” is a traditional glass triangular prism - the kind that most high school physics students use to reflect and disperse white light (Figure 1).

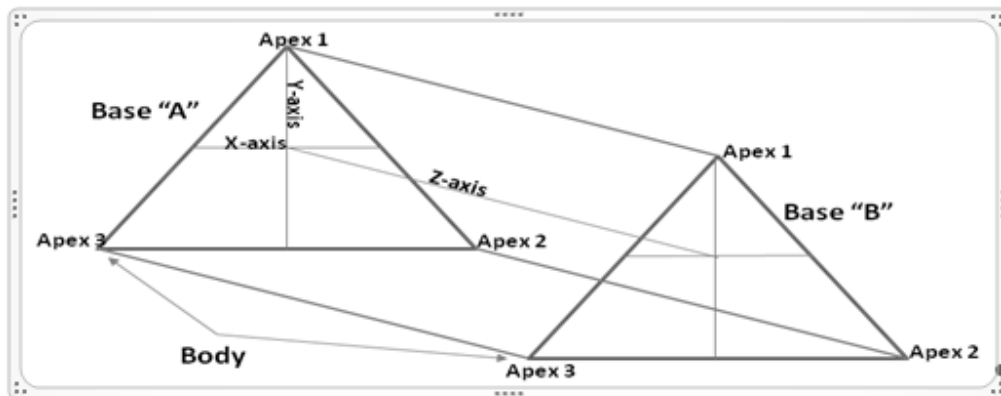


Figure 1. Physical Traits

Figure 1 depicts a common reference system for the “War Prism.” The “War Prism,” like the traditional triangular prism, consists of two triangular bases (Bases “A” and “B”) and a body with rectangular sides. The “War Prism” uses the X, Y, and Z axes as well as the apexes to provide a frame of reference within the prism. The “War Prism” uses the axis as any math student would when plotting on a graph. The numbers are plotted in the X, Y and Z planes according to the Cartesian Grid Coordinate System. The apexes are labeled for Base “A” as A1-A3 and for Base “B” as B1-B3.

### The “War Prism”- Logic

When white light passes through a prism, it is refracted or bent due to the changing medium through which it is passing (Figure 2).

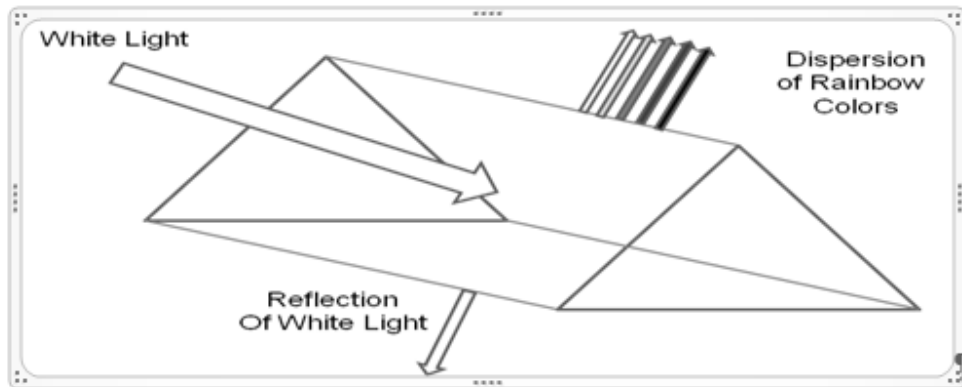


Figure 2. Functionalities

In this case, light passes from air through glass. Depending on the entry angle of the light, two phenomena may occur. The light may be merely reflected back into the atmosphere as white light. Or, if the angle is correct, the light may be dispersed into a rainbow of colors. The “War Prism’s” logic is based similarly. The “War Prism” represents a nation. The Nation’s strategy is the white light. If the nation applies the strategy at the correct angle, victory occurs - a dispersion of a rainbow of colors. If the nation does not apply strategy correctly, then the white light will merely be reflected as white light. The “War Prism” thus functions like a triangular prism by providing feedback to its user.

Science provides the basis of the “War Prism” logic, but it is in the prism’s artful application that this logic will benefit the user. In order to establish the unique concept of the “War Prism,” each of its key components will be defined to further establish the prism’s usefulness in conceptualizing, formulating and executing a counterinsurgency strategy.

### The Body – The Levels of War

The “War Prism’s” body represents the three levels of war (Figure 3).

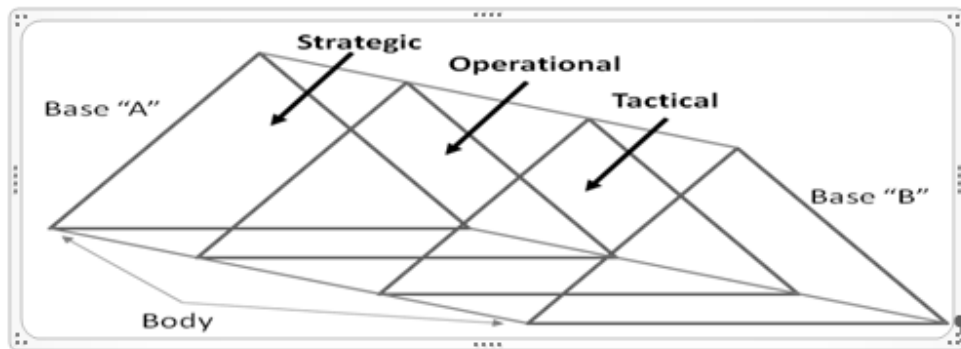


Figure 3. The Levels of War

Doctrinal definitions do apply. FM 3-0 states that the levels of war

define and clarify the relationship between strategy, operational approach, and tactical actions. The levels have no finite limits or boundaries. They correlate to specific levels of responsibility and planning. They help organize thought and approaches to a problem. The levels clearly distinguish between headquarters and the specific responsibilities and actions performed at each echelon.<sup>7</sup>

The “War Prism,” however, transcends the FM 3-0 “snowman” chart displayed in Figure 4<sup>8</sup>:

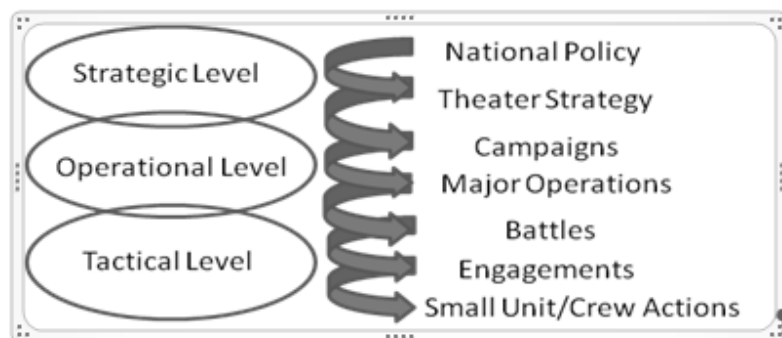


Figure 4. FM 3-0 Levels of War Chart

The purpose of the “War Prism” body then is to depict, separate, and distinguish the three levels of war so that they can be further analyzed. Strategists must remain cognizant of what level of war they are analyzing. Confusion often results as

deliberations drift among the levels of war without staying focused on the one being discussed at any given point. For example, tactical goals can be confused with operational objectives - which in fact are different. Just as a prism may refract light differently based upon where along its body the light enters, so it is with the “War Prism” as well.

The “War Prism” depicted in Figure 3 is in essence three distinct triangular prisms laid end to end – each representing a different level of war. If efforts at all levels of war are nested, then the “War Prism” will appear as one; however, if the efforts at all levels of war are not nested, the prisms will not align. By depicting the levels of war as a three-dimensional triangular prism, the “War Prism” introduces a framework from which to analyze the nesting of efforts at all levels of war. This framework is called the “Z-axis” – Unity of Effort.

#### The “Z-axis” – Unity of Effort

The “Z-axis” lines represent lines of continuity called Unity of Effort (Figure 5).

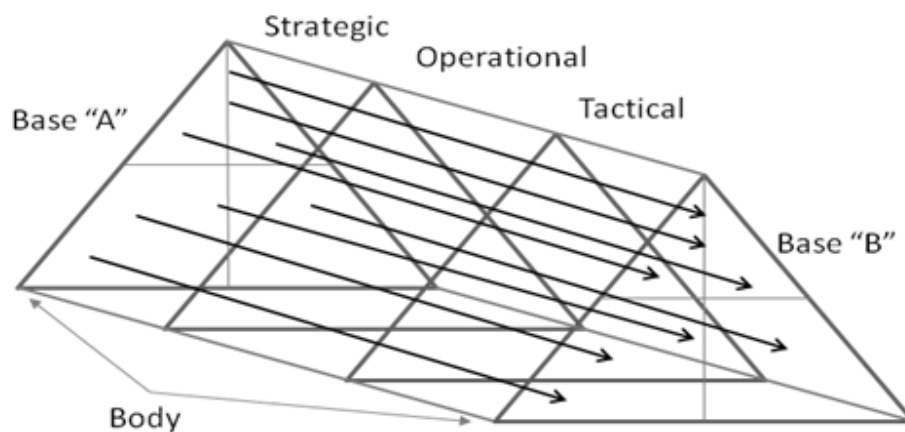


Figure 5. Unity of Effort Lines

The purpose of the Unity of Effort lines is to ensure that all levels of war are nested. All Soldiers early in their careers learn the importance of knowing the missions at least two-levels up and two-levels down their chain of command. The “War Prism” presents a framework to visualize the nesting of these complex concepts from the strategic to the tactical levels. These Unity of Effort lines direct the strategist or tactician in a unified action – “the synchronization, coordination, and/or integration of the activities of governmental and nongovernmental entities with military operations to achieve unity of effort.”<sup>9</sup> The strategist can now “travel” along these Unity of Effort lines throughout the levels of war to ensure that units are nesting to the correct concepts, missions, tasks, and purposes both up and down the chain of command. This ensures vertical nesting. The next section will detail the concept of friction.

#### The “War Prism” - Friction

The concept of friction is also included in the “War Prism.” As the high schooler’s triangular prism’s glass medium refracts the white light, so does the “War Prism’s” medium refracts strategy as well. The “War Prism’s” medium is called friction. Friction is “surface resistance to relative motion.”<sup>10</sup> The “War Prism” depicts friction as those forces within the environment that reflect or disperse the strategy in use. An infinite number of forces will impact the strategy – some foreseen, some not. Some forces will impact positively and some will impact negatively. Some will cancel others out while yet others will dominate. The bottom line is that friction will impact the implemented strategy. Clausewitz’ description of his concept of friction is *apropos*: “The difficulties accumulate and end by producing a kind of friction that is inconceivable unless one has experienced war.”<sup>11</sup> Clausewitz goes on to assert that “Everything in war is very simple,



but the simplest thing is difficult.”<sup>12</sup> So it is that the “War Prism’s” friction will also have a cumulative effect - either reflecting the strategy in use as white light – symbolizing defeat – or dispersing the strategy in use as a “rainbow” – symbolizing victory. Either way, the outcome of the strategy may not be what was first visualized at the beginning of the undertaking. Clearly defined end states and intermediate objectives along each Unity of Effort line, however, will help minimize the friction. The “War Prism” provides visibility to all levels of war.

The body of this prism is now constructed. It consists of three separate prisms that represent the three levels of war - strategic, operational and tactical – aligned end to end. The medium is called friction within which transverse many Unity of Effort lines. The “War Prism” further defines these Unity of Effort lines by using its Base “B,” but its Base “A” helps set the conditions to do so.

#### Base “A” – The Remarkable Trinity

Carl von Clausewitz explains his “remarkable trinity” as,

War is more than a true chameleon that slightly adapts its characteristics to the given case. As a total phenomenon its dominant tendencies always make war a paradoxical trinity, which are to be regarded as a blind natural force; of the play of chance and probability within which the creative spirit is free to roam; and of its element of subordination, as an instrument of policy, which makes it subject to reason alone.<sup>13</sup>

The “War Prism” uses this “Remarkable Trinity” base to clearly identify the type of war to be fought. The first base of the “War Prism” – Base “A” - is Clausewitz’ “remarkable” or “paradoxical” trinity as depicted in Figure 6.



Figure 6. Remarkable Trinity Base

To paraphrase Clausewitz: the three apexes of this triangular base represent three intricately related forces: primordial violence - manifested through the people; rational thought - manifested through the government; and chance - manifested through the military.<sup>14</sup> These three forces both attract and repel the true nature of war, orienting it to a particular point of equilibrium between the three forces within the triangle. This point of equilibrium defines the type of war which is being embarked upon. This, in essence, is the spectrum of war depicted triangularly rather than linearly. In some cases, the “force of chance” attracts the equilibrium point closer to its apex, indicating that the military will have a more dominant role. The true nature of this type of war would tend towards the high-intensity end of the spectrum, such as the Cold War that pitted two very large and very capable nuclear forces against one another. Sometimes the “force of primordial violence” attracts the equilibrium point closer to its apex, indicating that the true nature of this type of war tends to be centered on the people - such as acts of terrorism which inculcate fear in people and may not even directly involve militaries or governments. Finally, as “rational thought or policy” attracts the equilibrium point closer to the government apex, it indicates that the true nature of the conflict tends to be

diplomatic in nature involving political discourse more than the militaries or the people. This highlights Clausewitz' famous assertion that "War is...a continuation of political intercourse by other means."<sup>15</sup> Mao adds that "There is no reason to consider guerilla warfare separately from national policy."<sup>16</sup> Arguably, both theorists agree that the entire continuum of war is expressed within the Remarkable Trinity.

The "War Prism" uses Base "A" - the Remarkable Trinity - to clearly understand the conflict that is being embarked upon. Base "A" also helps identify along the X- and Y-axes what type of unity of effort lines will emerge from each apex – the government, the military, and the people. In order to develop a comprehensive strategy to apply all the national means available, the strategist must carefully think through each apex. The "War Prism" links Base "A" - the Remarkable Trinity - to Base "B" - the Defeat Mechanism – in order to do so.

#### Base "B" – The Defeat Mechanism<sup>17</sup>

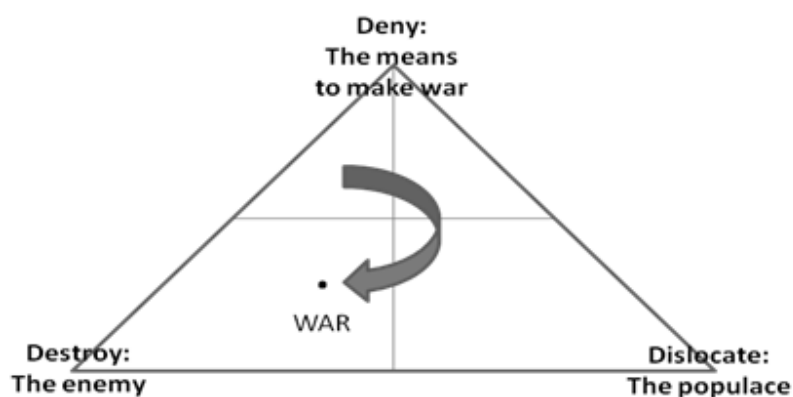


Figure 7. Defeat Mechanism Base

The US Army's Field Manual 3-0, Operations, defines a defeat mechanism as

the method through which friendly forces accomplish their mission against enemy opposition...Defeat mechanisms are not tactical missions; rather, they describe broad operational and tactical effects. Commanders must translate these effects into tactical tasks. Operational art formulates the most effective, efficient way to defeat enemy aims.<sup>18</sup>

This component of the “War Prism” depicts the defeat mechanisms, which represent the effects needed to win the war (Figure 7). This triangle’s apexes represent universal objectives required for victory in any war: 1) Dislocate the people, 2) Destroy the enemy, and 3) Deny the enemy the means to make war. Doctrinally, FM 3-0 lists four defeat mechanisms: 1) Destroy, 2) Dislocate, 3) Disintegrate, and 4) Isolate.<sup>19</sup> For the purposes of this paper, Disintegrate and Destroy are closely enough related and are combined under the “War Prism’s” Destroy defeat mechanism.<sup>20</sup> Also FM 3-0’s Isolate defeat mechanism is similar to the “War Prism’s” Deny defeat mechanism; therefore they are combined under the Deny defeat mechanism.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the “War Prism” consolidates the Army’s four doctrinal defeat mechanisms into three: Dislocate, Destroy, and Deny.

Dislocate is defined as, “to put out of place.”<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of the “War Prism”, the term “dislocate” means to remove the people from the enemy’s “place” and put them into the friendly “place” thereby relocating them - not physically, although at times that may need to be accomplished, but mentally - from the enemy’s side to your side. Deny is defined commonly as, “to withhold the possession, use, or enjoyment of.”<sup>23</sup> Deny in this defeat mechanism’s triangle apex is exactly that – withholding from the enemy the possession, use, or enjoyment of the means to make war. Destroy has many definitions in the dictionary and all of them seem applicable - “to put an end to; extinguish; to kill; slay; to render ineffective or useless; nullify; neutralize; invalidate.”<sup>24</sup>

Destroy is purely force-oriented; it refers to the intent and capability to kill our nation's enemies - both their forces and their command and control structure.

The second base – the Defeat Mechanism - of the “War Prism” is set. It is through the apexes of the Defeat Mechanism base that the unity of effort lines are fully developed. The strategist determines the effect sought along the unity of effort line through the X- and Y-axes of the Defeat Mechanism base, planning to Deny, Dislocate and/or Destroy.

### The “War Prism”

With the completion of Base “B” - the Defeat Mechanism - the “War Prism” is now completed. The two bases are randomly not linked (Figure 8).

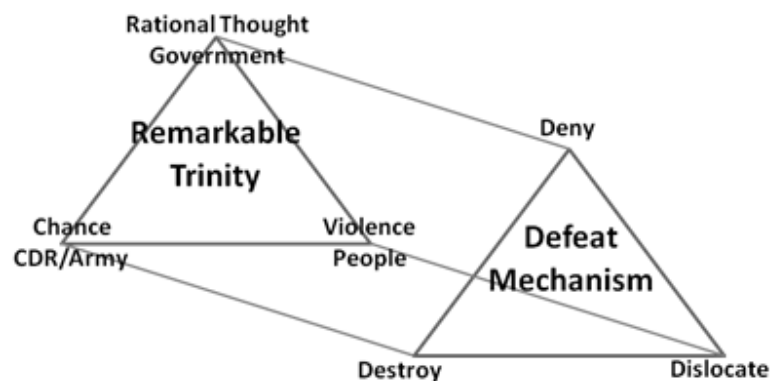


Figure 8. The “War Prism”

The Dislocate apex of the Defeat Mechanism base is linked to the Primordial Violence/People apex of the Remarkable Trinity base because both concepts center on the people. The Deny apex of the Defeat Mechanism base is linked to the Rational Thought/Government apex of the Remarkable Trinity base because both concepts relate to resourcing war – a function of governments. The Destroy apex of the Defeat

Mechanism base is linked to the Chance/Commander/Army apex of the Remarkable Trinity base because both concepts center on the military. The aforementioned unity of effort lines link the two bases throughout the levels of war from strategic to tactical. Conceptually the “War Prism” is set. The first step in the application of the “War Prism,” however, is correctly defining the imminent conflict.

#### “War Prism” Application

The first step is to identify the type of war. Clausewitz again sets the standard for this most important concept of identifying the true nature of the conflict, because only by doing so can the statesman decide upon a correct strategy. Accordingly, Clausewitz advises,

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesmen and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.<sup>25</sup>

Only by identifying the true nature of the war can the statesmen and strategists determine the correct strategy (way) that efficiently employs the available means to achieve the desired ends. Again, a correct application of the means to the ends will not occur without a correct identification of the nature of the conflict. Once the type of war is identified within the Remarkable Trinity base, a corresponding point in the Defeat Mechanism base can be established. This important first step must not be taken in a vacuum. The means available also effect the ways. For example, a nation that possesses only a high-intensity Army may not perform as efficiently or effectively in a low-intensity conflict even if the proper ways (strategies) are applied. In essence, by determining the “X” and “Y” coordinates of the point that represents the true nature of

the conflict on the Remarkable Trinity base and finding the correctly corresponding “X” and “Y” coordinates of the corresponding point on the Defeat Mechanism base, a proper strategy may be formulated by following the “Z-axis” of the prism – through the levels of war - representing the unity of effort of the campaign. The “War Prism” ensures that a command can graphically depict unity of effort. The elements of national power will help shape the unity of effort.

### Elements of Power & Lines of Operation/Effort

The unity of effort lines now become crucial in defining the multiple lines of effort and lines of operations that will determine the objectives for the conflict. “Logical lines of operations” have long been part of Army doctrine.<sup>26</sup> The Army has developed this concept further into two separate categories called Lines of Operation (LOO) and Lines of Effort (LOE). FM 3-0 defines a line of operation as “a line that defines the directional orientation of a force in time and space in relation to the enemy...Lines of operations connect a series of decisive points that lead to control of a geographic or force-oriented objective.”<sup>27</sup> A line of operation (LOO) by definition is a force-oriented concept. For operational design, the utility of LOOs resides clearly in their capabilities to destroy the enemy; therefore, LOOs are used only in the “War Prism’s” Destroy defeat mechanism.

Lines of Effort (LOE), on the other hand, are used when planning non-military factors - the other elements of National Power. FM 3-0 states that a LOE:

links multiple tasks and missions using the logic of purpose—cause and effect—to focus efforts toward establishing operational and strategic conditions. Lines of effort are essential to operational design when positional references to an enemy or adversary have little relevance. In operations involving many nonmilitary factors, lines of effort may be the only way to link tasks, effects, conditions, and the desired end state. Lines of effort are often essential to helping commanders visualize how military capabilities can support the other instruments of national power.<sup>28</sup>

The Defeat Mechanism base's apexes, Dislocate and Deny, therefore utilize LOEs.

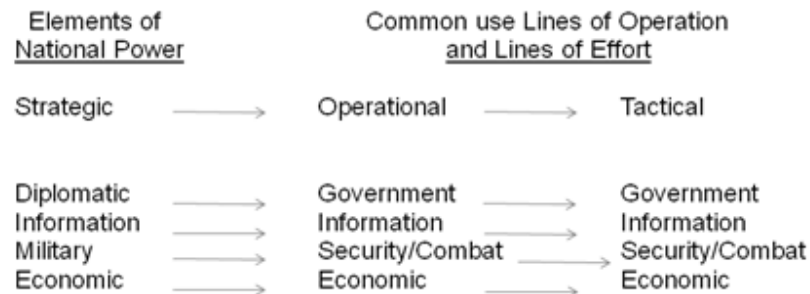


Figure 9. Linking National Power and Lines of Operation and Effort

The elements of national power - Diplomacy, Information, Military, and Economic - are used at the strategic level. Commonly used LOOs and LOEs at the operational and tactical level are Security/Combat, Governance, Economic, and Information (Figure 9). A coherent line of continuity can be inferred by aligning Security/Combat with Military (LOO) and Governance with Diplomacy (LOE) since these are arguably the same throughout the levels of war. The Economic LOE and Information LOE are labeled the same for all three levels of war. Thus the “War Prism” insures unity of effort by defining common LOOs and LOEs. While specific combinations of such LOOs and LOEs may be innumerable, the art of identifying these LOOs and LOEs in the framework of the “War Prism” forces the strategist to always consider the type of war along with the desired effects.

### Center of Gravity Analysis

If the nature of war is identified as a counterinsurgency then a distinction must be made between the roles and capabilities of the host nation and the assisting power.



The host nation must take ownership of the war, and the assisting power must assist the host nation - or transition power back to the host nation. Critical to the relationship between the host nation and the assisting power is the correct identification and articulation of the center of gravity (COG). Antulio Echevarria says Clausewitz defined the COG as the “focal point of force and movement, upon which the larger whole depends.”<sup>29</sup> Joe Strange calls centers of gravity “dynamic agents of action or influence.”<sup>30</sup> In the case of an insurgency the center of gravity is the populace. The insurgency’s critical capability is support in obtaining critical requirements, such as personnel, funds, food, weapons and safe refuge.<sup>31</sup> The host nation’s critical vulnerability is the legitimacy of its government in the eyes of the people.<sup>32</sup> After the center of gravity analysis, the LOOs and LOEs can be developed.

### Conceptual Design

By design, the “War Prism” ensures common reference points are used to develop each level of war by providing a triangular think pad for each level of war (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Level of War Think Pads

Within these triangles reside the applicable LOOs and LOEs. Applying the LOOs and LOEs to the Defeat Mechanism bases, the usefulness of this systematic thought process becomes clearer. Figures 11 through 13 depict the application of the “War Prism” in viewing a counterinsurgency from the strategic level down to the tactical level.

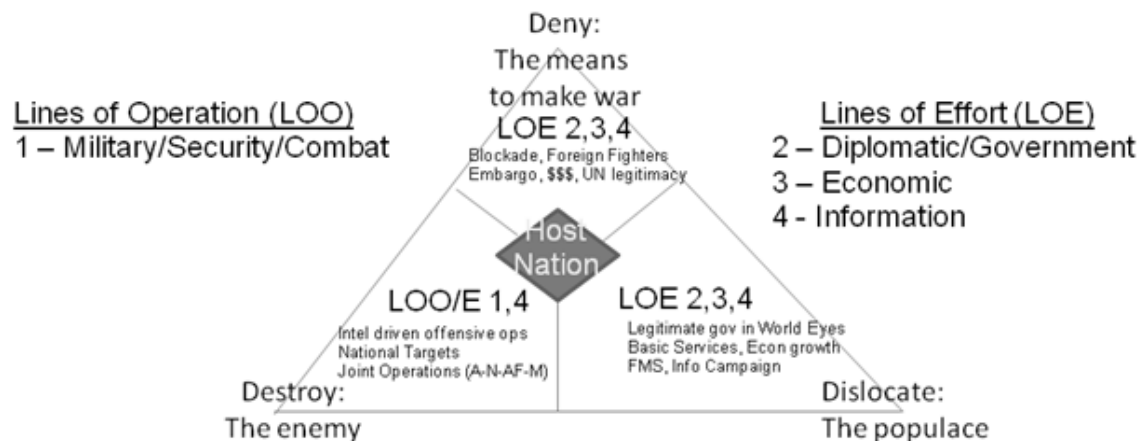


Figure 11. Strategic Defeat Mechanism Base

Using the Dislocation defeat mechanism at the strategic level, strategists must make every effort to assist the host nation to strengthen the legitimacy of its government by dislocating/separating the people from the insurgents and placing them on the side of the host nation. Programs must be put in place using all elements of national power to reinforce the host nation's governing legitimacy. This is a whole-of-government approach because conflicts across the spectrum of war often need more than just military assets. For example, using military, interagency, and intergovernmental subject matter experts to improve basic services, grow the economy, professionalize the security forces – both armed forces and police - and reconcile those elements of the insurgency that are reconcilable are but a few specific LOEs to develop with appropriate intermediate objectives and end states. In developing these LOEs, the military will

have the better understanding of the desired effect of “dislocate” - its end state and the means necessary to achieve it. Just as important, however, this thought process will necessitate working with the other governmental departments and agencies such as the Departments of State, Treasury, Homeland Defense, FBI and others to ensure unified action throughout these multiple lines of effort.

The Deny defeat mechanism at the strategic level will also use all aspects of national power - Diplomatic, Information, Military, Economic - to legitimize the host nation's government by “denying” the enemy the means to make war. This is a somewhat indirect approach to legitimizing the government by not directly strengthening the host nation government, but by weakening the enemy. Again a whole-of-government approach is needed that uses all available military, interagency and intergovernmental assets. For example, LOEs such as economic embargos, UN sanctions, international “quarantines” will all deny the insurgents access to critical resources (foreign arms, money and fighters). Effectively isolated, the enemy's ability and their legitimacy in the eyes of not only the host nation but the international community as well will be severely degraded. Further development of these “deny” effect LOEs with specific intermediate objectives and end states will also aid in parallel planning with other organizations outside the military.

The final defeat mechanism, the Destroy defeat mechanism at the strategic level will also use all elements of national power to attack with a more force-oriented focus. Destroying the enemy is a more traditional military task, but at the strategic level other agencies are needed as well. For example, the goal should go beyond isolating the enemy from foreign safe havens, arms, financing, training infrastructures and fighters;

the goal should be to destroy these enemy assets at the source. Doing so will entail the State Department and intelligence agencies - among others - working with many other countries outside the theater of war. National military assets will also be required to fully prosecute those designated national targets in theater. Further development of these specific LOOs will further develop the specificity in end states and means needed to accomplish such a whole-of-government approach.

Sliding down one level of war to the operational level, the same methodology applies. The center of gravity is the same: the populace. The defeat mechanisms the same, but the LOO/LOE intermediate objectives change. They are more specific at this level, and they support the host nation national goals and programs (Figure 12).

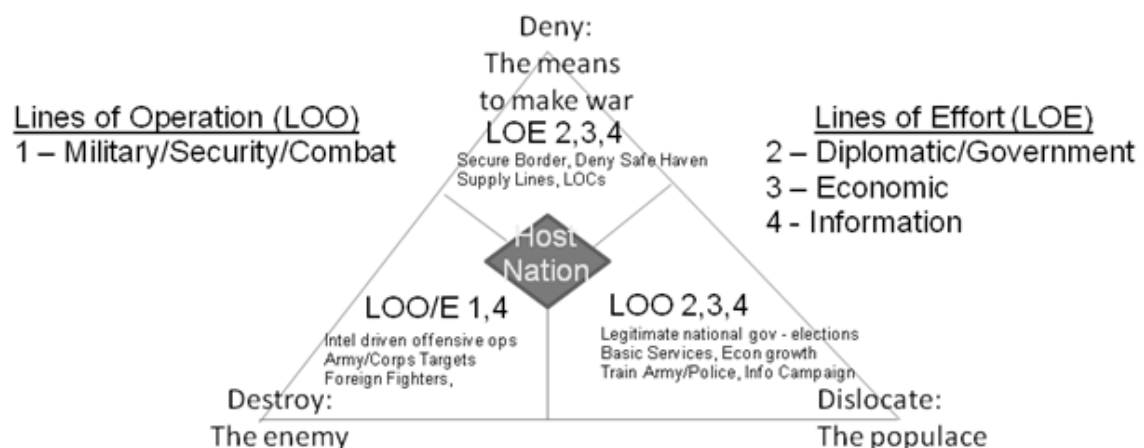


Figure 12. Operational Defeat Mechanism Base

For example, the Dislocate defeat mechanism now focuses on conducting national or provincial elections, selecting national ministers to manage basic services, growing industry and jobs, developing national resources, and professionalizing security forces. The Deny defeat mechanism focuses on ensuring borders are secure, ferreting out internal safe havens, disrupting insurgent lines of communications, interdicting and

stopping foreign fighter infiltration, and other missions designed to deny the insurgents the means to make war. Lastly, at the operational level the Army will destroy their targets and execute intelligence-driven operations on a large scale if required. Again, monitoring and executing across all LOO/LOEs simultaneously ensures the “massing” of operations and efforts on the center of gravity to achieve the desired effect – to dislocate the populace from the insurgents by enhancing the legitimacy of the host nation government. The whole-of-government approach is reaffirmed as the unity of effort LOOs and LOEs take into account the expertise of the host nation government augmented by the assisting interdepartmental and interagency subject matter experts.

At the tactical level - the Brigade, Battalion, and Company and below level - the center of gravity remains the same: the populace. The tactical defeat mechanisms also remain the same. The LOO/LOEs remain the same, but the intermediate objectives get progressively more specific (Figure 13).

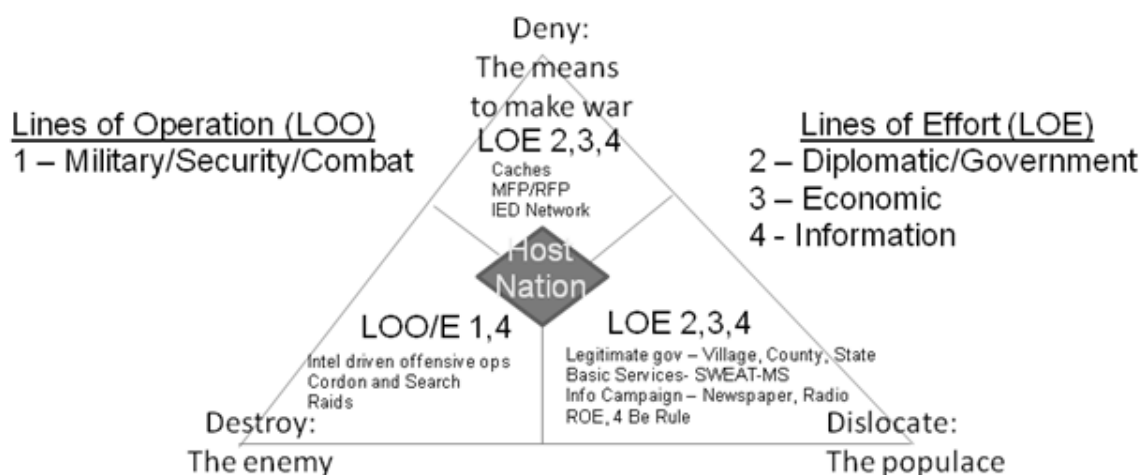


Figure 13. Tactical Level Defeat Mechanism Base

For example, within the Dislocate defeat mechanism platoons and companies focus on conducting legitimate village or district elections, building professional law enforcement,

partnering with host nation armed services, and improving basic services. In the Deny defeat mechanism, platoons and companies deny the enemy the means to make war by discovering insurgent caches, denying the enemy mortar and rocket firing points, and arresting bomb makers and financiers. In the Destroy defeat mechanism, platoons and companies destroy the irreconcilable insurgents through small-scale intelligence-driven operations that focus overwhelming combat power on the objective, leaving insurgents with two options - surrender or die. Even at the tactical level the whole-of-government approach is favored. Certainly host nation governmental and military experts will be available, but also quite possibly the assisting power will have interdepartmental and interagency experts in the form of Provincial Reconstruction Teams. To ensure unity of effort the military must plan for and insist on the input of these experts when formulating a campaign plan.

### Review

The “War Prism” accounts for all elements of national power - not just the military. The systematic and continuous application of all elements of national power will sow the seeds of victory by breaking the enemy’s will to resist. The “War Prism” facilitates evaluation of strategy across all levels of war by sliding up and down the “Z-axis.” This linkage of the LOO/LOEs ensures nesting at all levels as well as assurance that tactical level missions are supportive of operational and strategic level objectives. The true value of the “War Prism” resides in its potential to allow the strategist to conceptualize, formulate and execute a strategy from the strategic level down to the tactical level, rather than wandering around the “strategic abyss.”

At no time is any one defeat mechanism apex ignored, because it is the systematic and combined application of national power with these effects in mind that allows the strategist and the tactician, together with the commander, to ensure that all of the means at their disposal are working in harmony to achieve the ends required for victory. If the true nature of the war lies within the Destroy effect apex, then a more military-centric solution is needed. If the true nature of the conflict lies within the Deny effect apex, then a more diplomatic - or political-centric solution will be required. War is the continuation of politics by other means, so politics also appears in our theoretical model - and would be near the top of the Deny effect apex. If the populace is the center of gravity in an insurgency, then a strategy focused on separating the people from the insurgency should be adopted. The “War Prism” dictates that all lines of operation and effort are applied. This recalls the concept of mass - not a massing of tanks on the objective, but a massing of effects against the enemy's critical vulnerability.

### Conclusion

The “War Prism” accounts for the nature of war and aids in the correct formulation and application of strategy to fight wars in order to achieve political objectives. By thinking through this theoretical model, the practitioner is forced to identify the true nature of the conflict, the appropriate defeat mechanisms, and then apply all elements of national power in an effects based strategy to effectively and efficiently use the available means to achieve the desired ends. This is a difficult and complex process. History offers many examples of misapplications of strategy – most recently the United States engaging in a counterinsurgency fight in Iraq with a high-intensity army. It serves as a constant reminder that within the Remarkable Trinity all of

the many forms of warfare remain relevant. Antulio Echevarria compares war to the weather:

To be sure, Clausewitz believed all wars were things of the same nature. However, that nature was like the nature of the weather, dynamic, and its principal elements, even if always present, were constantly in flux. Like war, the weather consists of a few common and inescapable elements, such as barometric pressure, heat index, dew point, wind velocity, and so on. Nevertheless, the difference between a brief summer shower and a hurricane is significant, so much so, in fact, that we prepare for each quite differently. Indeed, the difference in degree is so great, the danger to our lives and property so much higher in the latter, that we might do well to consider showers and hurricanes different in kind, though both are certainly stormy weather. We might apply some of the same rules of thumb for each kind of weather, but also many different ones.<sup>33</sup>

The Remarkable Trinity covers the entire spectrum of war from high-intensity to low-intensity. War is like the weather. We can hope for good weather, and we can hope for a good war – a type of war that we are prepared to fight. In the end, though, we have the weather that we have, and we have the war that we have as well. We should not wear shorts and sandals in a blizzard, nor should we apply solely high-intensity means to a counterinsurgency. We must first correctly identify the type - or nature - of the war we are fighting. Then and only then can we determine the correct ways (strategy/tactics) to wage the war with the means at hand to achieve effectively and efficiently the desired ends. The “War Prism” provides a template for strategists, planners, and commanders to visualize the “unity of effort” that they are building in their campaign design from the strategic to the tactical levels. The “War Prism” enables them to fully visualize the campaign’s focus and linkage to strategic objectives in a coherent whole-of-government approach. By thinking through the Remarkable Trinity base to determine the correct nature of the conflict and then thinking through the Defeat Mechanism base of effects desired to be applied toward a center of gravity through



specific LOOs and LOEs, a truly whole-of-government campaign can be designed that coordinates, integrates, and focuses the efforts of not only the military but also the intergovernmental and interagency. Unity of effort is thereby achieved. As light passing through a glass prism at the correct entry angle is dispersed into a beautiful rainbow, so it is with strategy when applied correctly through the “War Prism.”

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Term “Hyperpower” popularized by French Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine in describing America’s world dominance in 1999. “To Paris, US Looks Like a “Hyperpower””, *International Herald Tribune*, February 5, 1999, [http://www.iht.com/articles/1999/02/05/france.t\\_0.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/1999/02/05/france.t_0.php), (accessed March 24, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *The Army*, Field Manual 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2001), 3-1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-7.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen Crane, *The Red Badge of Courage* (New York: Random House, 1993), 8.

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2008), GL-29.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, xiii.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2008), 6-1,6-2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Figure 6-1, 6-2.

<sup>9</sup> *Joint Operations*, xviii.

<sup>10</sup> *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, editor Stuart Berg Flexnor (New York, Random House, 1993), 768.

<sup>11</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1984), 119.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 87.

<sup>16</sup> Mao Tse-Tung, *On Guerilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith II (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), 43.

<sup>17</sup> Author Note: MG Joseph Taluto, MND North Commander, during Operation Iraqi Freedom III in January 2005, gave a presentation to his brigade commanders that used this term. This is the first time the author heard this term used.

<sup>18</sup> *Operations*, 2008, 6-9.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 6-10.

<sup>22</sup> *Random House Unabridged Dictionary*, 566.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 533.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 540-541.

<sup>25</sup> Clausewitz, *On War*, 88-89.

<sup>26</sup> U.S. Department of the Army, *Operations*, Field Manual 3-0 (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Army, 2001), 5-9.

<sup>27</sup> *Operations*, 2008, 6-12.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 6-13.

<sup>29</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 177.

<sup>30</sup> Joe Strange, *Perspectives on Warfighting Number Four Centers of Gravity & Critical Vulnerabilities* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University, 2002), 47.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 43-55.

<sup>32</sup> Max G. Manwaring, and John T. Fishel, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency: Toward a New Analytical Approach," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 3 (Winter 1992): 285.

<sup>33</sup> Echevarria, *Clausewitz and Contemporary War*, 56.